

## Missing man with Alzheimer's

**January 22, 1986**  
**Thousand Trails Campground, Aguanga**  
**1986-004**

By Walt Walker

During an RMRU Board of Directors meeting held at my residence, we received a call from the Elsinore station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a 69 year old man with Alzheimer's disease, was missing from the Thousand Trails Campground. We activated the RMRU paging system and backed that up with telephone calls to the RMRU members.

When we arrived at the campground the ranger informed us of the details concerning the missing man and what had been done to try and locate him. Staff from the campground, local people, and guests at the campground had searched all the surrounding area. The area was about equally divided between rural, urban, and rolling hills covered with brush. The highway was also a factor to consider. On missions with circumstances like these, it is always hard to try and figure out where to start searching. With all the prior searching there was not going to be a solo set of footprints close in.



**LIFT OFF - The powerful Bell 212 helicopter is seen here leaving base camp for air search. The Thousand Trails trailer camp can be seen in the back.**

RMRU members were assigned in groups of two, to search local hazard areas, a dirt road leading into the mountains, areas around the lake and a canyon that contained a small waterfall. All this did not produce any positive results. Shortly after 8:00 a.m. we were informed by the ranger that an employee of the campground was sure she had seen the missing man as she was leaving the campground the evening before.

She had seen him near the entrance road and the highway. We requested the sheriff to contact the Marine Base at El Toro and ask for a helicopter.

A search team was sent out to the highway and they radioed back that they had a solo set of tracks along the edge of the roadway. They were instructed to continue searching along the road. A Marine twin turbined Huey search and rescue helicopter arrived and we told the crew the details and where we wanted them to search. While the helicopter flew search, RMRU grabbed a bite to eat and discussed what to do next. The sheriff's department had put out a missing persons report on the state computer. We had just finished eating when we were informed that the missing man had been located by the San Diego Police department and that he was O.K.



**BIG MACHINE** - RMRU member Rob Gardner looks over the controls of the Marine rescue helicopter between flights during the search for Earl Rice missing from the Thousand Trails Camp near Aguanga. Fellow member Cameron Robbins (with back to camera) was the RMRU observer who flew with the Marine crew during the search.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.